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RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ASTANA 001164

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/RPM, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2034

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: UNDER SECRETARY BURNS'S JULY 10 MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT NAZARBAYEV

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Under Secretary Burns brought greetings to President Nazarbayev from President Obama and underscored the importance of the U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship by noting Kazakhstan was his delegation's first stop in Central Asia. He told Nazarbayev that President Obama is committed to strengthening the U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship. Burns briefed Nazarbayev on the July 6-7 Obama-Medvedev summit in Moscow. Nazarbayev replied he was pleased with the summit results, noting, "A good U.S.-Russia relationship is good for Kazakhstan." Although the delegation's visit to Astana broke no new ground, the symbolic value of the visit was important for the government of Kazakhstan, for Central Asia, and for Kazakhstan's big neighbors, Russia and China. That Burns reiterated twice, once at the beginning of the meeting and again at the end, that President Obama is committed to a strong U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship will pay off significantly, especially if the U.S. side follows through with greater engagement and reasonably regular very high-level visits.

¶2. (S) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Running through his checklist, Nazarbayev

-- said his decision to opt for the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union over WTO accession was an economic, not a political, decision;

-- reiterated his commitment to Central Asian integration but noted objective realities that have prevented it so far;

-- declared no one wants a nuclear Iran and repeated his willingness to be helpful on this issue;

-- reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment, and intention to increase it, to humanitarian assistance in the struggle to stabilize and develop Afghanistan;

-- complimented President Obama's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the U.S. effort to reach a post-START agreement with Russia;

-- mused on Kazakhstan's possible priorities during its OSCE chairmanship;

-- called for greater diversification of U.S. investment in

Kazakhstan; and

-- said he hoped President Obama would visit Kazakhstan, "perhaps during a stop-over on his way to China." END SUMMARY.

13. (C) Under Secretary Burns met with Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana on July 10. To save time, Nazarbayev conducted the majority of the meeting in Russian without translation. Even so, the originally scheduled 30-minute meeting lasted 75 minutes.

U.S. PARTICIPANTS:

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Bill Burns
Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake
Special Assistant to the President and NSC Senior Director for Russia and Eurasia Mike McFaul
Ambassador Richard Hoagland (notetaker)

KAZAKHSTANI PARTICIPANTS:

President Nursultan Nazarbayev
State Secretary Kanat Saudabayev
Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin
President's Foreign Policy Adviser Kairat Sarybay
Kazakhstan's Ambassador to the United States Erlan Idrisov

14. (C) Welcoming Under Secretary Burns, Nazarbayev noted this was the first high-level delegation of the new administration in Washington. Burns said that President Obama sends President Nazarbayev his best regards, and noted that stopping first in Kazakhstan during his trip to Central Asia shows the priority President Obama places on the

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U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship.

BURNS BRIEFS NAZARBAYEV ON THE MOSCOW SUMMIT

15. (S) Nazarbayev commented he was pleased with the results of the July 6-7 Obama-Medvedev summit in Moscow and hoped Burns could provide frank information about it. He added he had urged both Russian President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin multiple times, including as late as the morning of July 6, just hours before Obama's arrival in Moscow, to seize the opportunity to make the summit a success, to acknowledge differences but look for areas of agreement and mutual interest. "A good U.S.-Russia relationship is good for Kazakhstan," Nazarbayev explained.

16. (S) Burns thanked Nazarbayev for his useful role and told him President Obama was pleased with his time in Moscow. Burns said that Obama is determined to strengthen the U.S.-Russia relationship and that Obama told Medvedev and Putin he wants a relationship of equals that focuses on common interests. Burns said that the summit improved the tone of the relationship and had concrete results: a joint understanding on a post-START agreement by the end of 2009; a first-ever agreement to transit lethal military supplies through Russia to Afghanistan; agreement to reestablish military-to-military relations; and the establishment of a new bilateral commission to cover a broad range of interests. He added that the two presidents also discussed the Middle East, non-proliferation in relation to Iran and North Korea, and Obama's serious review of the technical efficiency and cost of placing elements of the U.S. missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. At that point, Nazarbayev interrupted to say, "That's what most affects Russia." Burns also reviewed President Obama's long conversation with Prime Minister Putin on how to avoid future problems in the bilateral relationship, characterizing Putin as direct and (mostly) constructive. Burns stressed that significant areas of disagreement remain, such as Georgia, but summarized the summit as having demonstrated more attention on both sides to shared interests than we'd seen in several years. He again thanked President Nazarbayev for his helpful background role.

17. (S) Nazarbayev thanked Burns for the comprehensive readout and complimented President Obama for his energy in the first six months of his administration. Nazarbayev said he wanted to emphasize the importance of the United States in building strong relations in the

region. On Russia, he said Moscow sees itself as a superpower and needs to feel needed and respected. It is a nation that historically suffers and in recent years has felt humiliated. Just its nuclear weapons and energy resources alone make Russia a superpower, but, he said, "The United States needs to understand Russia's peculiarities." Good U.S.-Russia relations help Kazakhstan. Smiling, Nazarbayev said, "Bureaucrats can cause problems, but leaders must have vision." Nazarbayev then worked his way through his checklist of issues.

WTO ACCESSION AND THE RUSSIA-BELARUS-KAZAKHSTAN CUSTOMS UNION

¶8. (S) Nazarbayev said that the fact that Kazakhstan is in the post-Soviet space inevitably influences its reality and its choices. He said that joining the customs union was actually his idea and that it was an economic, not a political, decision. He said he had long advocated Eurasian economic integration, and the time was now ripe. "If we harmonize our trade law, investment will flow in. Russia has roads, railroads, and ports -- we are landlocked and need to take fullest advantage of existing infrastructure. I'm telling you the same thing I tell our European partners. After all, a customs union is nothing special or new -- they exist in many parts of the world." Burns urged Nazarbayev not to abandon Kazakhstan's bilateral WTO accession negotiations.

DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY

¶9. (S) Still thinking of Russia, Nazarbayev explained that Russians equate democracy with disorder, and that's why both Russia and Kazakhstan emphasize economic development as a way to increase

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stability. He mused, "Americans can't seem to understand the experiences we've lived through. Terrorists, extremists, nationalists -- all can be terribly destabilizing. We need to rebuild our societies [after the difficult dissolution of the Soviet Union]. We want stronger relations with the United States."

CENTRAL ASIA

¶10. (S) Nazarbayev said he remains fully committed to Central Asian integration, but the difficulty lies in the fact that the region is "still living out its Soviet contradictions." He cited examples of current boundaries dividing ethnic groups, and noted in passing that Uzbekistan's Samarkand is in fact a Tajik city. He added that the countries of the region have starkly differing levels of political and economic development, as well as greatly differing populations and geographies. "Yet our security depends on getting along. Kazakhstan should be the model because of its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional harmony. Perhaps our economic integration with Russia will help."

IRAN

¶11. (S) Nazarbayev declared that no one wants a nuclear Iran. However, a war with Iran would be devastating. He summarized that he has frequently counseled Iran's leaders to follow Kazakhstan's example in renouncing nuclear ambitions. He praised international diplomatic efforts to engage Iran, and suggested that Turkey might be helpful in this regard.

CHINA

¶12. (S) Nazarbayev pointed out Kazakhstan's long border with China and noted that many ethnic Kazakhs live in western China. He acknowledged that western China is currently experiencing "nationalities problems." He urged the United States to have "sensitive relations" with China, saying, "The world is a complex place, but you can play a positive role."

AFGHANISTAN

¶13. (S) Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan wants to be increasingly helpful in Afghanistan, "especially on the humanitarian side." As he has said before, he noted that he is uncomfortable with the concept of "a good Talib and a bad Talib," implying he doubts the wisdom of President Karzai's desire for reconciliation with the Taliban.

"They're all bad if they are terrorists." Nazarbayev noted the necessity of security in Afghanistan, if economic and humanitarian assistance is not to be wasted. But even given the current conditions, Nazarbayev said, Kazakhstan is prepared to continue, and to increase, its assistance. He noted briefly that the massive production of narcotics in Afghanistan is worrying.

NON-PROLIFERATION

¶14. (S) Nazarbayev complimented President Obama's commitment to non-proliferation and said he was especially pleased with the President's Prague speech in April. He noted he has proposed that the United Nations designate every August 29 as World Non-Proliferation Day. He acknowledged that Vice President Biden had invited him to the nuclear security summit in the United States early in 2010, and said he is pleased the United States is working with Russia on a new post-START agreement.

OSCE

¶15. (S) Nazarbayev thanked the United States for supporting Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE chairmanship. Listing possible priorities for the chairmanship year, he said, "We are rich in oil and gas but might want to promote alternative energy, possibly European security, and maybe questions of ethnic harmony and accord." Referring to another possibility of a priority, "frozen conflicts," Nazarbayev said, "The Georgia-Russia question is difficult, but the independence of Georgia

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is fundamental." (NOTE: Foreign Minister Tazhin has the lead to develop Kazakhstan's OSCE priorities, and Nazarbayev did not seem to have been recently briefed on Tazhin's current thinking. END NOTE.)

¶16. (S) On Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship, Burns said the United States looks forward to working with Kazakhstan closely in the run-up to the 2010 chairmanship. "This will be a good opportunity to show further progress on the reforms you've undertaken." He stressed that it is in Kazakhstan's interest to show further movement on reform and its Madrid commitments before 2010, and the heightened scrutiny that the OSCE Chairmanship will bring.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

¶17. (C) Nazarbayev judged that U.S.-Kazakhstan economic cooperation is a success story that has been mutually beneficial. "However," he suggested, "we need to move forward, step by step, toward diversification of our investment." He cited the newly opened General Electric locomotive plant in Astana as a success story for diversification, and added, "It will create many jobs."

¶18. (S) In summing up, Burns said he wanted to repeat that President Obama is committed to strengthening the U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship. Nazarbayev quipped, "Maybe he could stop in Kazakhstan on his way to China."

¶19. (S) COMMENT: It is clear Nazarbayev was eager to meet with the Burns delegation because he changed his usually immutable summer vacation schedule twice to accommodate the delegation's complex itinerary. Although the delegation's visit to Astana broke no new ground, it was important for the government of Kazakhstan, for Central Asia, and for Kazakhstan's big neighbors, Russia and China. That Burns reiterated twice, once at the beginning of the meeting and again at the end, that President Obama is committed to a stronger U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship will pay off, especially if the U.S. side follows through with greater engagement and reasonably regular very high-level visits. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND